



# News Release

**For immediate release:** September 17, 2009

(09-148)

Contacts: [Michele Roberts](#), Immunization Program CHILD Profile  
[Gordon MacCracken](#), Communications Office

360-236-3720

360-236-4072

## **For the first time, immunization rates released for Washington teens**

*Results show there's more work to do to keep teens protected*

**OLYMPIA** — For the first time ever, state-level data of teen immunization rates is available from the National Immunization Survey. The survey included teens 13 to 17 years old. While our state is behind the national average for most of the immunizations recommended for teens, we are above the national rate for human papillomavirus vaccine — at 46.5 percent compared to the national average of 37.2 percent.

The survey estimates how many teens have received six recommended vaccines. Like HPV vaccine, two others are newer vaccines recommended for 11- and 12-year-olds. In Washington, 34.7 percent of teens had received the Tdap vaccine that protects against whooping cough, compared to the national average of 40.8 percent. Forty percent of Washington teens got the meningococcal vaccine that protects against some types of meningococcal disease, a leading cause of bacterial meningitis. The national rate for this vaccine is 41.8 percent.

The survey also covers three routine childhood vaccines: measles, mumps and rubella vaccine (MMR), hepatitis B vaccine and chickenpox (varicella) vaccine.

“Teens are a hard population to reach when it comes to vaccination,” said Secretary of Health Mary Selecky. “They don’t visit health care providers regularly like children and infants do. It’s important for parents to get their teens the recommended immunizations, which they may need to attend college, join the military, or travel abroad.”

Teens need immunizations to stay healthy. Some diseases, such as chickenpox, are more dangerous for teens than they are for young children. Teens can also spread diseases to friends and family members who aren’t fully protected. Parents should get their teens immunized when they see their health care provider for sports physicals, injuries, and mild illnesses.

— More —

The state continues to promote the importance of ensuring that teens are fully immunized on time for the best protection; missing or delaying even one vaccine leaves teens at risk for disease. Health care providers receive tools, such as the CHILD Profile Immunization Registry, to improve immunization services. The Department of Health works closely with providers, health insurers, local health agencies, and partners to make sure children have access to vaccines as we face changes to the Universal Childhood Vaccine program. The state changed from supplying all vaccines for children to a system where the state supplies vaccine for only some children.

“Immunizations are just as important for teens as they are for infants and children,” Selecky said. “This year’s whooping cough cases at the state high school wrestling championships reminded us that we need to be sure teens are up to date on their immunizations.”

The Department of Health provides vaccines, except the human papillomavirus (HPV) vaccine, at no cost to health care providers for children under age 19. The agency does purchase the HPV vaccine for low-income children under age 19.

Parents are urged to use their regular health care providers for teen immunizations. For help finding a health care provider or an immunization clinic, call the [local health agency](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm](http://www.doh.wa.gov/LHJMap/LHJMap.htm)) in your area or the Family Health Hotline at 1-800-322-2588.

More information on teen immunizations is available on the Department of Health [Immunization Program Web site](#) ([www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/](http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/Immunize/)); [CHILD Profile](#) ([www.childprofile.org](http://www.childprofile.org)) is also available online. Information on [changes to the Universal Childhood Vaccine program](#) is available online (<http://www.doh.wa.gov/cfh/immunize/providers/universal.htm>). The teen National Immunization Survey (<http://www.cdc.gov/vaccines/stats-surv/imz-coverage.htm#nisteen>) is available from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

###

Visit the Washington Department of Health Web site at <a href="http://www.doh.wa.gov">http://www.doh.wa.gov</a> for a healthy dose of information.
--